I remember youth soccer as a five year old. My best friend’s father was my coach, a big red bearded man who rarely cracked a smile. We were playing in some kind of youth soccer championship game, and I remember playing only two quarters of the game while my friend played the entirety. I remember losing that game and expressing my childhood disappointment afterward to my parents.

I remember getting pinned in my first junior high wrestling tournament. I went out on the blue, crinkled mat with much anticipation, much excitement. I remember grappling, falling and glancing to the referee as he looked and made the call. I remember retrieving my dignity from the mat and the comforting arm of my coach around my shoulder. I remember that first and only year of wrestling and finishing the season with a record of eight wins and seven loses.

I remember as a Junior Varsity football player running plays against the back up Varsity defense. I remember running off tackle, through the shifting cracks, following blocks and dodging linebackers. I remember the anger in the eyes of the defensive linemen and the threats of black and blue. And I remember my coach, calling us DAWGS and cheering us, encouraging us and making me feel like a football player.

I remember being told I was going to swim the two hundred Individual Medley as a junior in high school. I remember dreading the fifty meters of butterfly. I remember dreading the fifty meters of backstroke. But I finished, time and time again throughout my final two years. And though I was never that fast, I once and a while got a point and a pat on the back from my coach.

I remember my first Varsity soccer game my senior year of high school. I remember the school we played, red jerseys the color of fire and fight. We were a first year program – a throw away game. And I remember watching our team, from my defensive mid position, score six goals to their one. And I remember playing with heart, playing with purpose and playing as a team.

And I remember my first marathon at thirty-seven. I remember the training to get ready. I remember the early morning running, the long Sunday runs and carrying water for twenty miles. I remember that early Saturday morning in June and the fear I had. I remember miles twenty-two through twenty-five when I vowed I would never do anything like this again – my body in so much pain, every joint, muscle and bone screaming at me. And I remember finishing, the hardest thing I had ever done, and then planning for the next one later that day.

I believe. I believe in sport, in the power of sport. I believe in Red Grange, Mia Hamm, Michael Jordan, Babe Ruth. I believe sport teaches and shapes. I believe sport helps with disappointments, teaches perseverance, encourages self esteem, guides acceptance, harnesses team work and shows you that you can achieve. I believe. I believe in sport.